

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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R 151015Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL PALERMO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2506
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
AMCONSUL TURIN

UNCLAS PALERMO 0610

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: JUNE 11-12 REFERENDUM RESULTS IN SICILY.

REF: ROME 10563

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH VOTER TURNOUT WAS LOW (67.8 PERCENT), SICILY
CAME OUT STRONGLY AGAINST GOVERNMENT FINANCING OF PARTIES (54.8
PERCENT) BUT VOTED 67.2 PERCENT IN FAVOR OF RETAINING THE REALE
PUBLIC ORDER LAW. END SUMMARY.

1. MANY INTERPRET SICILY'S LOA REFERENDUM TURNOUT AS A MARK OF
POPULAR PROTEST. IN GELA, FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT HAS AFFLIC-
TED THE PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY ONLY 47.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS WENT
TO THE POLLS. IN AUGUSTA, 1000 WORKERS OF THE SHUT-OUT LIQUI-
CHIMICA PLANT PUBLICLY REFUSED TO VOTE ALTOGETHER WHILE THE TURNOUT
IN OTHER DEPRESSED TOWNS (GROTTE, LICATA, PALMA DI MONTECHIARO)
AVERAGED 50 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE. IN THE ISLANDS OF LAMPEDUSA
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AND LINOSA, A LARGE MAJORITY REFUSED TO VOTE AS A PROTEST AGAINST
TUNISIA'S RECENT SEIZURE OF ISLAND FISHING BOATS AND CREWS.
2. VOTER SUPPORT FOR THE ABOLITION OF PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL
PARTIES WAS OVERWHELMING IN ALL INDUSTRIAL AREAS AND PROVINCIAL
CAPITALS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF RAGUSA: 67 PERCENT IN MESSINA, 64
PERCENT IN SIRACUSA, 63 PERCENT IN TRAPANI, 62 PERCENT IN AGRIGENTO,
61 PERCENT IN CATANIA, 60 PERCENT IN PALERMO, 57 PERCENT IN ENNA,

AND 55 PERCENT IN CALTANISSETTA.

3. SIMILARLY, "NO" VOTES IN SUPPORT OF THE REALE LAW WERE FEWER IN CAPITALS THAN IN THE PROVINCES. THE CITY OF TRAPANI, FOR EXAMPLE, VOTED 42 PERCENT AGAINST THE REALE LAW VIS A VIS A PROVINCE-WIDE TOTAL OF 36 PERCENT. INDEED, IN THE CASE OF BOTH REFERENDE, VOTERS IN THE SMALLER, MORE DEPRESSED AREAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED PARTIES DIRECTIVES MORE CLOSELY THAN DID THOSE WHO VOTED IN PROVINCIAL CAPITALS AND INDUSTRIAL CENTERS.

4. OF CURIOUS NOTE: A PCI PRE-REFERENDUM WORRY THAT THE MAFIA WOULD STIMULATE VOTER SENTIMENT AGAINST THE PUBLIC ORDER LAW WAS DISPROVED BY VOTING PATTERNS. TOWNSHIP WITH TRADITIONAL MAFIA INFLUENCE CAST FEWER VOTES FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE REALE LAW THAN REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL AVERAGES. ONLY 29 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS IN CORLEONE VOTED TO ABROGATE THE REALE LAW WHILE THE FORMER MAFIA STONGHOLD OF VILLALBA VOTED NEARLY 85 PERCENT IN FAVOR OF RETENTION.

COMMENT: THOUGH MUCH EDITORIAL EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE LOCALLY TO DRAW "NEW" CONCLUSIONS FROM SICILY'S REFERENDUM VOTE, LITTLE NOVELTY, AND POSSIBLY EVEN LESS SIGNIFIANCE, EMERGED FROM THE JUNE 11-12 BALLOTING. WHILE IT IS REASSURING TO KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SICILIANS CAN AND DO VOTE (IN SECRET) AGAINST THE MAFIA, ANYONE WHO EXPECTED THE ISLAND'S ELECTORATE TO DO ANYTHING BUT VOTE AGAINST PUBLIC FUNDING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES JUST DID NOT KNOW HIS SICILIANS. COLLINS

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